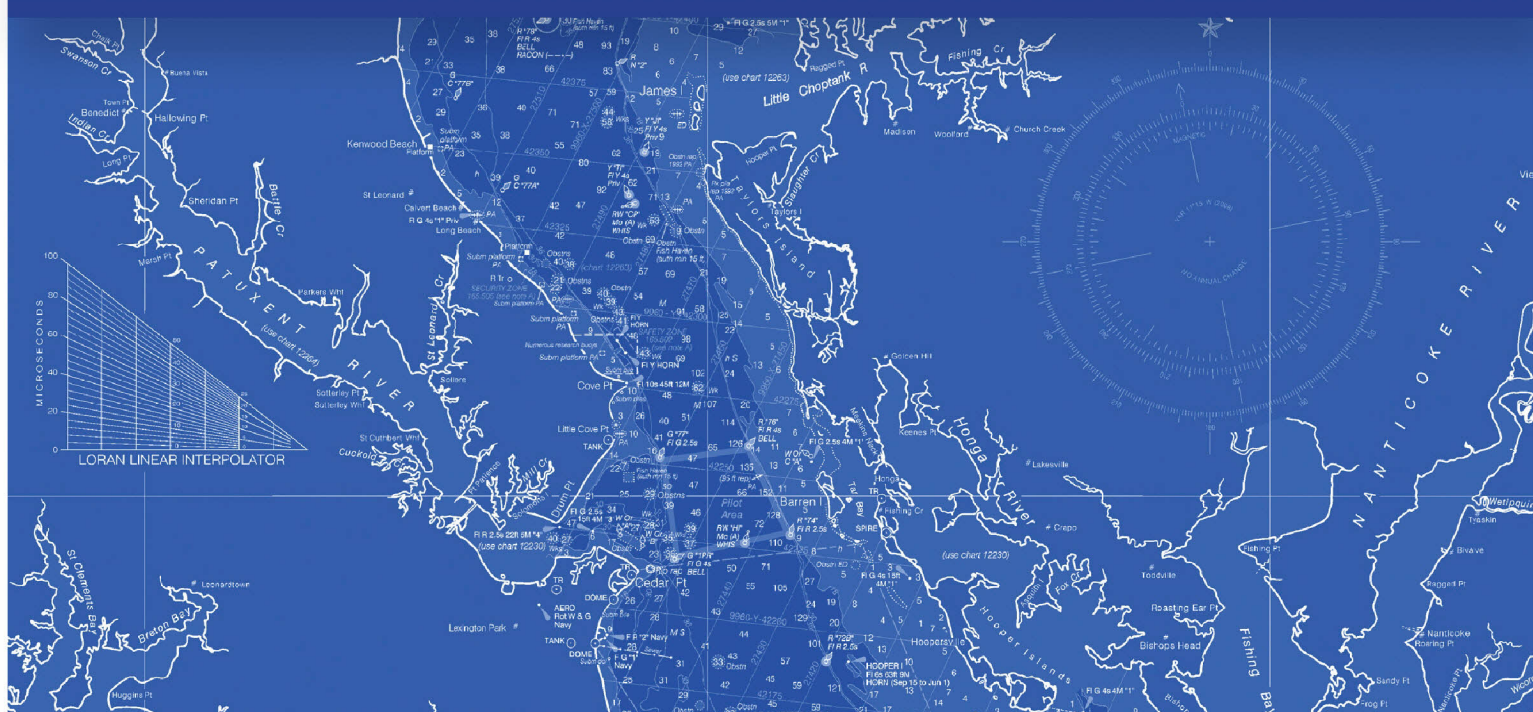


Charting the Chesapeake's Recovery

The Course for Clean Water in the Bay and its Watershed



Chesapeake Bay Program
A Watershed Partnership



CHARTING THE CHESAPEAKE'S RECOVERY – BACKGROUNDER

The Chesapeake Bay Program has charted a new course for recovery of the Chesapeake Bay to dramatically accelerate the cleanup, increase government accountability and provide clean water in streams, creeks and rivers throughout the watershed.

2011 MILESTONES (Also see fact sheets for jurisdictions)

In the past, the Chesapeake Bay Program has set one overall goal for cleaning up the Bay a decade or more in the future. But this approach was like a ladder without rungs – it did not include the incremental, short-term goals needed for steady progress toward a recovery to good health.

Now the partnership will use short-term goals to increase restoration work and improve accountability. Every two years, the states and D.C. will meet milestones for putting measures in place to reduce pollution and protect nature. This approach will require many states to intensify the pace of cleanup, often doubling the previous rate of progress. By meeting two-year milestones, the partnership will put all projects and programs in place that are needed for the Chesapeake Bay to recover no later than 2025. If a milestone is missed, the partners will follow their back-up plans called contingencies, which include a variety of additional options for reducing pollution.

CHESAPEAKE BAY TMDL

Because the Bay has not been cleaned up and along with many tributaries does not meet federal water quality standards, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is creating the Chesapeake Bay TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load). A TMDL limits the amount of pollution allowed in a waterway. The Chesapeake Bay has to follow this pollution diet to be healthy. The pollution diet will be divided among the six states and D.C. – each jurisdiction will be responsible for reducing pollution in their streams, creeks and rivers that contribute to the Bay's problems.

About 35,000 such pollution diets have been created nationwide, but the Chesapeake Bay TMDL will be the largest and most complex ever – actually a combination of up to 92 TMDLs. Unlike other TMDLs, it will require detailed plans for meeting pollution limits. The EPA will also impose consequences if enough progress isn't made. The two-year milestones will be used to measure progress. Meeting the pollution diet will be difficult and require that all levels of government expand cleanup programs, funding sources and legal authorities.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

In May 2009, President Barack Obama issued an Executive Order declaring the Chesapeake Bay a national treasure and directing certain federal agencies to make restoration a greater priority. Key provisions include:

- Establishing a Bay Federal Leadership Committee comprised of representatives from key agencies
- Directing EPA to use its Clean Water Act authorities to the maximum extent possible
- Improving agricultural conservation practices and focusing financial support
- Reducing water pollution from federal lands and facilities
- Developing an interagency Chesapeake Bay Climate Change Strategy
- Expanding public access to the Bay through federal property
- Strengthening scientific support for decision-making

FUNDING THE RECOVERY

The new course for the Chesapeake Bay's recovery is only possible because of unprecedented financial commitments now made to cleanup. A recent infusion of federal dollars will now springboard progress forward.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will provide hundreds of millions of dollars for projects that advance cleanup in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, ranging from wastewater treatment plant upgrades to green infrastructure projects. The amount of money provided in one year would normally take five to 10 years to secure. Federal agencies with funds for Bay projects include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of the Interior and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Farm Bill

The 2008 Farm Bill will provide an additional \$188 million over the next four years for agricultural conservation projects that reduce pollution flowing into the streams, creeks and rivers that feed the Bay. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will manage the funds through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, a program that helps the region's farmers. The funding is one of the largest single federal investments in Bay cleanup and a first-time targeting of Farm Bill dollars to a specific watershed. The funding will support nutrient management, cover crops, crop residue management, vegetative buffers and other agricultural conservation practices.

SUPPORT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Assistance from local governments, watershed groups and region residents can further accelerate the pace of cleanup. In fact, because of the incredible size and complexity of the task, it is only through this type of collective effort that the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed will be restored.

Local governments have significant control over zoning and development issues that impact water quality – through policy, legislation and regulation the region's estimated 1,800 counties and municipalities can reduce polluted runoff and increase green infrastructure. Local governments will also play a key role in meeting the pollution limits of the Chesapeake TMDL by implementing projects at the local level.

Hundreds of watershed groups have historically conducted cleanup projects – their efforts will need to continue and expand. The federal partners of the Chesapeake Bay Program will support watershed groups through grant funding. This will include millions of dollars in financial resources provided by the Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Program and Small Watershed Grants.

The watershed is home to almost 17 million people and how each person lives impacts the Bay. To restore the Chesapeake, everyone must take personal responsibility for reducing their impact on the environment – skipping lawn fertilizer, planting native trees, installing a rain barrel, picking up after pets, using a phosphorus free-dishwasher detergent, driving less and volunteering for a watershed group are a few simple steps.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Government accountability for restoring the health of the Bay and watershed is critical. The new approach charted for recovery includes many ways to monitor progress and adjust course if necessary.

Two-year Milestones and Contingencies: Progress putting measures in place to reduce pollution can be tracked every two years. If partners fail to meet the milestones, then they will turn to back-up plans that increase resources and tighten policies.

Chesapeake TMDL and Consequences: State and local governments throughout the watershed will be required to meet the pollution diet of the Chesapeake TMDL. If enough pollution reduction measures aren't put in place, the U.S. EPA can impose consequences.

Independent Evaluator: Partners have agreed to use a national independent scientific organization to monitor the performance of the program. A panel of scientists, policy experts and environmental specialists will evaluate the Chesapeake Bay Program's efforts and provide recommendations on how to make improvements.

Bay Barometer: This is an annual assessment of the Bay's health and restoration efforts. Each spring the *Bay Barometer* shows how much progress the Chesapeake Bay Program has made toward goals, including for reducing pollution from the main sources.

Adaptive Management: The Chesapeake Bay Program will constantly analyze the latest information about the Bay's health and cleanup efforts. Using the science and data, the partners can react to the latest trends in the watershed and adjust work accordingly.

BAY RECOVERY

For more than 400 years, the Chesapeake Bay has suffered from the impacts of human activity. Since 1950, the population of the watershed has doubled, which has led to the destruction of forests and wetlands and created sprawling development. Pollution from agriculture, sewage treatment plants, air pollution and urban and suburban runoff damages the watershed. The result is a severely degraded ecosystem that is out of its natural balance. The Chesapeake is now also affected by climate change in the form of rising sea level and warmer water temperatures. These factors have created a greater sense of urgency to restore and protect the Bay.

The health of the Bay and its watershed should steadily improve as significant progress in reducing pollution is made every two years through the milestones. The first signs of improvement should be in the freshwater streams and rivers that flow into the Bay. The Chesapeake, however, is a vast and complex ecosystem, and it takes time for nature to heal.

Scientists are unsure of how quickly the Bay will respond to restoration efforts because cleanup of such a large estuary is unprecedented. But scientists widely agree that putting projects in place to reduce pollution must remain the primary focus – the health of the ecosystem will then improve accordingly, although there could be a delay as pollutants are decreased and water quality, habitats and aquatic life are reestablished.